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T W O

S E R M O N S

Preached in

Layton-Stone Chapel,
E S S E X,

I. On *Friday*, February 6, 1756,

BEING

The Day appointed by his MAJESTY for a
GENERAL FAST.

II. On *Sunday*, February 15, following.

By WILLIAM TOTTON, M. A.
Late Fellow of St. *John's* College, CAMBRIDGE.

Published at the Request of the AUDIENCE.

L O N D O N:

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WILLIAM TOTTON.

TWO

SERMONS

Preached in

Leysen-stone Chapel

ESSAY

I. On Friday, February 6, 1736

By

The Day appointed by his Majesty for
GENERAL T. A. A.

II. On Sunday, February 13, following

By WILLIAM TOTTON, M. A.
Last Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge.

Printed at the Request of the Auditors

LONDON

Printed for W. Innes and J. Richardson, in Pall-mall, near the Theatre, in the Strand, in the Year 1736.

TO
MY MUCH ESTEEMED FRIENDS,
THE
WORTHY INHABITANTS
OF
LAYTON-STONE,
THESE DISCOURSES,
PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,
ARE
WITH ALL RESPECT
AND
GRATITUDE,
INSCRIBED
BY THEIR
VERY AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,
AND
OBLIGED HUMBLE SERVANT,
WILLIAM TOTTON.

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WILLIAM TOTTEN.

To the Reverend
Dr. RUTHERFORTH,
Archdeacon of *ESSEX*.

Reverend Sir,

TH E peculiar marks of friendship
You honoured me with, as well as
the many excellent instructions You gave
me, while I was under Your care in the
Univerfity, would render me inexcufable,
if I did not embrace the earlieft oppor-
tunity to make a public acknowledgment
of both.

I have, therefore, taken the liberty to
place Your name before thefe **DISCOURSES**
as they belong to no one with fo much
juftice, nor can be prefented any where
with fo great a propriety, as to **HIM** un-
der whom I was fo fortunately plac'd;
and by whose kind hand I was firft con-
ducted into the pleafant paths of facred
knowledge. **I**

ii DEDICATION.

I am truly sensible these my first fruits in Divinity, will be a standing evidence against me, how much I have fallen short of making such suitable improvements as might reasonably be expected from those advantages I enjoyed, in so able a GUIDE: but as they were requested in a manner I could not resist, it gave me an opportunity I have long waited for, of expressing the grateful sense I retain of all Your chearful labours in my service, and giving You a testimony of that most affectionate esteem which will ever possess my heart.

I am, Dear Sir,

with the sincerest respect,

Your much obliged,

and most obedient servant

William Totton.

TWO
SERMONS, &c.

SERMON I.

I. PETER, V. 6.

*Humble yourselves therefore under the
mighty hand of GOD!*

THERE cannot be a more pleasing entertainment, or a more useful, as well as noble employment for the mind of man, than to contemplate those various perfections, which together compleat the adorable character of God.

To think upon that *wisdom which founded the earth*, and that *understanding which established the heavens*:—To consider that goodness which is graciously extended to ALL, and communicates happiness to an universe of beings:—and to reflect upon that amazing power, so illustriously displayed throughout creation's ample range;—is not only the most delightful exercise of those faculties and powers we are endowed with, but very highly proper to excite in our minds becoming apprehen-

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sions of our Creator ; and fill our hearts with suitable affections towards him : for infinite and unfathomable wisdom, must ever strike us with admiration and esteem :—goodness unlimited and for ever inexhaustible, cannot but fill us with adoration and pious love :—and uncontrollable power and omnipotence, produce in our souls that veneration and dread, which will cast us down in the profoundest humility before his awful throne :—from the united influence of which holy affections, will result that religious behaviour due from dependent creatures to so transcendently great and exalted a BEING ; upon whom they must rely every moment for protection, comfort and happiness in this life ; and on whose power and goodness they must depend for blessedness to all eternity.

It is, however, the last of these glorious perfections of God, his adorable omnipotence, which the late awakening judgments call upon us to remember, and which the present solemnity gives me an opportunity to remind you of : for as we are called together by royal authority, to humble ourselves before almighty God ; to intreat him to avert his judgments from us ; and take us and our affairs under his favour and protection ; I thought I could not better answer the pious intention of our assembling this day, than by directing your thoughts to the consideration of the sovereign power of God, as a just motive for walking

walking humbly with him at all times; as well as a proper reason for our humiliation before him on this day.—But how shall we enter upon the description? what can language do? and where find words to describe that exalted perfection, which holy Job represents so far beyond our abilities to comprehend! for, *as touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out!* And after displaying, in another place, the glory of this great attribute in the several astonishing instances there recited, he cries out with holy admiration and surprize, *Lo! these are but part of his ways! for how little a portion is heard of him! but the thunder of his power who can understand?* Though we cannot however conceive the nature of this incomprehensible perfection in the Divine Being, yet we behold such magnificent displays of it in the beautiful works of his creation, as must force from us the pious acknowledgment of the wise son of Sirach, *The Lord is terrible, and very great; and marvellous in his power!* No one can doubt of this truth, who will but open his eyes, and look unto the heavens above, where so many illustrious bodies incessantly blaze forth the glory of their great Creator. What an idea does it convey to our minds of the amazing greatness of his power, when we only contemplate that glorious luminary the sun; “the eye and soul of this great world!” *The sun that giveth light,* says the son of Sirach,

looketh upon all things; and the work thereof is full of the glory of the LORD! What but omnipotence could create so surprizing a body of fire, of so many hundred thousand miles in diameter? which at the distance of seventy-six millions of miles, administers to us light and heat, and all the innumerable blessings and comforts of life.

How it astonishes the mind to think upon those wonderful orbs that roll unweariedly around him; and have been preserved regular and uniform in their revolutions from the first day of their creation to the present hour! But what still more highly confounds the imagination of man, at the same time that it magnifies the astonishing power of God, is the consideration that this is not the only sun, nor these the only worlds in the universe, but that all those glittering stars that bespangle the glowing firmament, are so many other suns to enlighten as many other systems, in the boundless and unmeasurable extent of God's universal empire and dominion. "For, it is no ways probable," says a late ingenious and accurate astronomer, * "that God Almighty, who always acts with infinite wisdom, and never does any thing in vain, should create so many suns, and place them alone at such great distances from each other, and not have made other bodies which he has placed near them, to be nourished,

* See Keill's astronomical lectures. p. 40.

“nourished, animated, and refreshed by the light
 “and heat of these suns in which by which energy

“Hence we are to consider the whole universe
 “as a glorious palace for an infinitely great, and
 “every-where present GOD; and that all the
 “systems of worlds are as so many theatres in
 “which he displays his infinite wisdom, good-
 “ness and power.”

After this contemplation then has been sufficiently indulged; after we have admired the beauty, the order, and magnificence of these works of an ALMIGHTY HAND; when we come to look back to their surprizing original, and remember, that *by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth: that he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and they were created:* this is the most striking thought of all; a reflection, that gives us the grandest idea of the omnipotent power of GOD; represents it most unutterably great; most inconceivably magnificent! and obliges us to unite in the pious observation of the devout psalmist; *the heavens declare the glory of GOD, and the firmament sheweth his handy works!*

And as these heavenly bodies first started into being at his sovereign command, so would they rush out of it instantly, whenever it shall be his pleasure: that they are preserved therefore in such beautiful order, and uninterrupted harmony, must
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be ascribed to the influence of the same almighty energy, by which, at first, they were so wonderfully created. These then are some of the most signal effects of the divine power; which I chose at this time to single out from the innumerable other instances we see about us, as they will presently lead us to some useful conclusions peculiarly suitable to this occasion.

Not, however, that we need look so far as the heavens for a proof of this perfection in the DEITY; since, from the glorious sun in the firmament, to the humblest blade of grass, his omnipotence is displayed in every thing we behold. Not only nature itself is indebted for its birth to his almighty hand, but all its various blessings flow from his unremitted and universal influence. That power which warms in the sun, and sparkles in the gem; flows in the stream, and refreshes in the breeze;—cheers in the fruits, and blossoms in the flowers! *Thou visitest the earth, and blessest it; says the Psalmist, thou makest it very plenteous: thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy clouds drop fatness: they drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are cloathed with flocks; the vallies also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing!* And can we forbear to join the universal chorus? can we refrain from uniting in the pleasing rapture of the royal Psalmist, *O Lord, how manifold are thy works!*

works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches! so full — that we may with justice renew his pious question, *who can express the mighty acts of the LORD? who can shew forth all his praise?* to run through the numberless manifestations of his power, visible through the whole circle of creation, would be a subject which the tongue of an angel would never be able to exhaust. For the LORD, says the son of Sirach, *hath not given power to his saints to declare all his marvellous works, which the Almighty LORD hath firmly settled; that whatsoever is might be established for his glory! how then shall we be able to magnifie him? for he is great above all his works! who hath seen him, that he might tell us, and who can magnifie him as he is? there are yet hid greater things than these; for we have seen only few of his works!* but from what we do see — from that bright and stupendous display of it, which the heavens hold forth to our wondering sight, and more astonish'd understandings, we discover enough to acknowledge with holy David, *that the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great KING over all the earth!* we discover enough to admire, with the prophet Isaiah, *the glory of the LORD; and to adore the excellency of our GOD!* and, with humble Job, *to abhor ourselves, and repent before him in dust and ashes:* which leads me to the second observation I intend to make from the words of the text, that the con-

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sideration of God's universal sovereignty and power, ought to be a motive with us at all times to walk before him with humility, reverence, and godly fear.

For what less should the thoughts of this awful perfection of the most high God, but strike us with a sense of our own vileness, littleness and vanity? of our continual dependence upon him; and infinite obligations to him? and what dispositions can we find out so very becoming, and proper for sinful, weak, and dependent creatures as godly humility, and the devoutest awe? what less should the sense of the glorious majesty and power of God, deeply impressed upon our minds, but excite in us a perpetual vigilance and care to secure an interest in his favour, by daily advancing to higher degrees of christian excellence and perfection? This is the happy effect which God himself informs the patriarch Abraham, the contemplation of his omnipotence ought to have upon him. *I am the almighty God: walk before me; and be thou perfect.* Now humility is the ground-work of perfection: till we are lowly in our own eyes, we are in ignorance of our sinfulness, wretchedness, and guilt! we are strangers to that true contrition of soul; that inward abasement, and self-abhorrence, which we must feel in our hearts, before God will ever look upon us: *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity;*

eternity ; whose name is holy ! I dwell in the high and holy place ; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit ; to revive the spirit of the humble ; and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. And the reason God can never look upon us till we appear before him in this unfeigned humiliation of heart and soul, is because without this deep sense of our imperfections ; and without this bitter compunction for them ; 'tis impossible we should resolve in earnest to abandon them ; and return with all our hearts to our forsaken and offended God. Pride is so busy to insinuate its subtil poison into our hearts ; so industrious to whisper its pernicious lies into our ears, that without submitting to this proper self-abasement and detestation, as a necessary antidote against its destructive venom, we shall be over-run with vanity ; and ruined by our self-conceit : for the natural consequence of thinking too well of ourselves already, (which we are most of us inclined to do) will always be this,—that we shall feel no disposition to aim at higher advancements in christianity ; nor ever aspire with unfeigned ardor after that *righteousness*, with which they only, says our blessed LORD, *who hunger and thirst after it, shall ever be filled.*

Just apprehensions then of the power of God, cannot but render us ambitious of his favour : for if we have once secured his affectionate regard,

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what is there we can possibly desire, which so great a BEING cannot do for us?—*I know*, says holy Job, *that thou canst do every thing!* for infinite power will enable him to accomplish those gracious designs for our happiness, which infinite wisdom and goodness may contrive. If then, the sense of God's omnipotence raises in us such a solicitous desire of his favour, that desire will naturally lead us to humility; since humility appears to be the foundation of christian perfection; and christian perfection can only recommend us to God.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God. A duty, you see, incumbent upon us at all times, if we wish for the protection of his almighty power; and to share in the blessings of his affection and love; and which I cannot but exhort you to at this time, with peculiar earnestness and importunity: for, is there not *wrath gone out from the LORD?* *Are not the judgments of God manifestly abroad in the world?* *Hath not the LORD arisen to shake terribly the earth?* Is not the destroying angel gone forth with his awful commission? and ought not the extensive march he has already taken, to be looked upon as a convincing proof of the divine displeasure. Is not the tremendous catastrophe which has lately befallen the metropolis of a neighbouring kingdom, in alliance and friendship with us, sufficient to strike the most undaunted mind with the utmost consternation and

and dread? Can the cries of their misery, which have deeply pierced our hearts, even at this distance from them, fail to excite in us the tenderest commiseration? *Alas! alas! that great city Lisbon! that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come!* But while we are filled with compassion for their misery and distress, we should be awakened to a serious concern for our own safety and deliverance. It has been already seen what reason there is for walking before the Almighty at all times in pious humility and holy awe; but when that power, which makes this always our reasonable duty, begins to be exerted in the most dreadful manner; when the LORD GOD, *to whom vengeance belongeth*, begins to make bare his mighty arm, and publicly pour down wrath upon the guilty head; then is it high time for sinners to return to him with contrite hearts; resolving unfeignedly to serve him in true holiness and righteousness, with reverence and godly fear: for *shall not the dread of his majesty make us afraid?* Let us hear the expostulation of God with the people of the Jews, by his prophet Jeremiah, chap. v. 22. *Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not; fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence?* Most undoubtedly we shall, if we only recollect for one moment, that we know not how soon, to us, as well as

unto them, *our God may be a consuming fire.* It is to be hoped we shall not be tempted to indulge ourselves in sin, and lessen the terror these judgments ought to awaken in our minds, by ascribing them altogether to the effect of natural causes, and excluding the interposition of an ALMIGHTY HAND ! for this is only the mean artifice of those little philosophers, who would be happy if they thought themselves out of the reach of divine power ; and glad if they could pull down the ALMIGHTY from his throne. But can we be so absurd as to imagine, that the God of nature has placed the powers of nature so far out of his reach, that he has no longer any command or dominion over them ? can we be so impious, as well as foolish to think that HE,—*who doth what he will in the armies of heaven and earth ; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou ? that HE,—who maketh a path in the sea, and a way in the mighty waters ; who commandeth the sun and it shineth not ; and sealeth up the stars ;* that HE is not able, whenever HE pleases, to let loose the powers of nature for the punishment of the disobedient ; or to suspend their operations for the protection of the just ? Those marvellous instances of his power, already taken notice of, must force conviction upon every man in his senses, that all nature must be for ever at his command ; and that what with a word he created, with a word
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he can at any time destroy. If these dreadful events which have lately struck us with surprize; were so entirely the unavoidable consequences of natural causes, that PROVIDENCE could not prevent them, why do they not oftener come to pass? what is there to controul and restrain them if it is not the omnipotence of that God who at first gave them a being? and whenever they are suffered to produce these effects, what is it to be ascribed to, but his uncontrollable will; for *HE maketh, saith Solomon, the creature his weapon against his enemies; and the world shall fight with him against the unwise.*

Let us not therefore flatter ourselves with the vain hope of being secured from these calamities by our peculiar situation and happy climate: since no situation whatever can possibly carry us out of the reach of God's hand! and as we have already been twice alarmed with these convulsions of the earth, even in our own much boasted island, we can never conclude, without absurdity, that it is impossible they should ever return. Ye who are weak, or wicked enough to entertain so presumptuous a thought,—will ye vouchsafe to believe the scriptures? if ye will submit to their authority, let me ask you in the words of the prophet Isaiah, *Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? that the everlasting God, the LORD, the CREATOR of the ends of the*
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the earth ; who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span ; who hath weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a ballance—is HE, who sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers ! all nations before HIM are as nothing ! nay less than nothing, and vanity : behold, says the prophet, they are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the ballance ! behold ! HE taketh up the isles as a very little thing ! If this will not convince you what it is in the power of God to do, hear from the mouth of other divine writers, what it has done ! remember, Moses informs you, that *the LORD once made a new thing, to shew his displeasure against Korah and his company ; for as soon as the prophet had done speaking, the ground clave asunder that was under them ; and they went down alive into the pit, and perish'd from among the congregation !* Will you not acknowledge this to have been one effect of the immediate interposition of the divine power ? or will you provoke the LORD to make a new thing once again, to satisfy you it is in his power to do it ? Will you dare to ascribe this event to a natural cause, or the temper of the climate ; when the inspired writer assures us, it was not only uncommon and extraordinary, but something entirely new ? But what will you say to the astonishing success of those prayers and midnight praises Paul
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and Silas sent up to the throne of God? do you remember, *that suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately the doors were open'd, and every one's bands were loosed?* if you remember this, you cannot but cry out, with wonder and conviction, *who seeth not that the hand of the LORD is in all this?* There are, besides these, many other passages in scripture, proper to be laid before you upon this occasion; a few of which I shall therefore beg leave to select. *The earth trembled and quaked, says holy David, the very foundations of the hills shook, and were removed, because HE was wroth! the channels of waters were seen, the very foundations of the round world were discovered at thy chiding, O LORD! at the blast of the breath of thy displeasure. For HE looketh, saith holy Job, upon the earth and it trembleth! HE toucheth the hills, and they smoke! the pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof! HE removeth the mountains, and they know it not; and overturneth the rocks in his anger! HE shaketh the earth out of its place, and the pillars thereof tremble!* a very sufficient reason for which the prophet Samuel hath assigned—for *the pillars of the earth are the LORD's; and HE hath set the world upon them.* I shall close these magnificent descriptions of God's universal and tremendous power, with the words of the prophet Habakkuk. *God came from Teman,*
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and the HOLY ONE from Mount Paran! his glory covered the heavens; and the earth was full of his praise! when he marched through the land in indignation, and threshed the heathen in his anger;—the mountains saw him and they trembled! the overflowing of the water passed by! the deep uttered his voice, and lift his hands on high! was the LORD displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea? that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation. Before him went the pestilence; and burning coals went forth at his feet! he beheld, and drove asunder the nations! and the everlasting mountains were scattered; and the perpetual hills did bow! Doubt then no longer of the particular agency of the divine PROVIDENCE in those events which have lately been brought to pass; but let us stand in awe, and sin not, that we may be preserved, and defended from them.

Another very important reason for *our humbling ourselves before the LORD our GOD*, and for which we are particularly met together at this time, is the expectation we are in of a most bloody and destructive war; the extent of which, none but an all-wise GOD can foresee; and no POWER but that *which maketh wars to cease in all the world*, can prevent from bringing destruction upon us.

He only it is, *who ruleth the raging of the sea, and stilleth the waves thereof when they arise; who commandeth*

commandeth the winds and the water, and they instantly obey him!—HE who once divided the sea for his chosen people! who made the waters to stand on an heap, and led them through the deep as through a wilderness!—HE only it is who can be the guardian of our boasted fleets; and bless our attempts with a glorious success!—HE who slew in the camp of the Assyrians, in one night, one hundred, fourscore, and five thousand men! HE who marched before the Israelites, for their protection from the Egyptians, in a pillar of a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night!—HE can send forth again the angel of his presence before us, to trouble and discomfit the host of our enemies, and bring us the victory by the most unexpected means.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that you may engage his favour and omnipotence in your defence! which leads me in the last place to point out to you that proper humiliation, which will procure for us so inestimable a blessing.

And, in few words, it is that humiliation, which must produce in our hearts an unfeigned contrition for our manifold impieties; and impress upon our minds a lasting sense of our ingratitude to God.—It is that humiliation which does not consist in one day's mortification of the body, but in mortifying and destroying all the disorders of our souls.—It is that humiliation, which from raising in us this

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proper self-abhorrence, will lead us for the future, upon truly religious principles,—a love of God, and just sense of our obligations to him—to persevere in all holiness and righteousness to the end of our days.—Finally, it is that humiliation which must be accompanied in every one of us, with an entire renunciation of all those unholy tempers; those impure affections; those unruly passions; those sinful dispositions and unchristian practices, which have long separated between God and us, and must in the end, bring down his judgments upon us, if not repented of, and forsaken. —I cannot but own it would be much more agreeable to applaud than reprove; and sincerely should I rejoice, did I not see much greater occasion for censure than praise. But this place is too sacred for flattery to be used; neither is this a time for dissimulation or silence! I must therefore, with freedom observe to you, that *our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespasses are grown up unto the heavens!*—Look around you in the world! where do you see any traces of the pure religion of the blessed Jesus? Where do you meet with any that are hungry and thirsting after righteousness? whose meat and drink it is, to do the will of their father which is in heaven?—Where is the love of God to be found?—How few are there, who can cry out with the devout Psalmist, *Like as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so longeth*

longeth my soul after thee, O God! My soul is athirst for God! yea, even for the living God! When shall I come to appear in the presence of my God? Whoever is bold enough to shew forth such extraordinary piety, is he not immediately branded with the name of enthusiast, and made the subject of ridicule and contempt?—Who is there that will stand up for the cause of God and religion? and who will not be ashamed to confess the faith of the Gospel? Look round and tell me,—instead of pure and undefiled religion, what do you discover but a scene of universal corruption and impiety? In the higher ranks of men, what do we behold, but dissoluteness and prophaneness, luxury and pride? an affected contempt of every thing serious and sacred; and a glorying in that which is their greatest shame? as if it were beneath a gentleman to be a christian; and below him to stoop to that awful Power, which could speak him out of being the next moment if he pleased!—Among the common people of the land, what do we see but drunkenness and shameless debaucheries? what do we hear but that sacred name perpetually blasphemed by horrid oaths and imprecations, which is the highest joy of every pious soul; and the everlasting delight of adoring angels! And from the highest to the lowest, do we not observe a dreadful prophanation of the Lord's-Day? The men of business often devoting it to

their worldly and temporal affairs ; and the men of gaiety, to idle pleasures and insignificant amusements ! as if one day in seven was too much to be taken from the trifling concerns of this transient scene, to advance the perfection of our better part, and secure its happiness to all eternity.

But let us turn our eyes upon those who make greater pretences to christianity ! do they afford us a more agreeable prospect ? alas ! we discover, to our great concern and disappointment, the same peevishness and ill-nature ; the same passion and pride ; the same vanities and intemperance ; the same uncharitableness, and spirit of revenge, as we find in others who make no such pretensions ! we see them indeed oftener in the house of God ; and therein lies all the difference ; but we may observe them, many times, so irreverent and indelicate, as is a painful conviction they come there more out of custom, and to keep up their reputation, than from a love of God, and delight in his service ! Some we behold, gazing about them, when they should be humbled on their knees before their Maker ; and others reclined in the most indolent posture, when the high praises of God are in their mouths !—Is this to *praise* and worship the LORD according to his excellent Greatness ! No ! my Brethren ! this is all but a solemn mockery of God ! *drawing nigh to him with their lips while their hearts are far from him !* And as such is the devo-

devotion of these nominal christians, where is the wonder that no better should be their lives?—nothing of the true spirit of christianity to be seen in them! nothing of that holiness and piety; that heavenly-mindedness and contempt of the world! that benevolence and purity! that meekness and humility, which are the distinguishing marks of the disciples of Christ! *Shall I not visit for these things, saith the LORD? shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* A nation who sin against the purest knowledge and the clearest light; whose provocation therefore is the greater; their sin the more exceeding sinful; and their destruction the more abundantly just.

But may this day's humiliation and devotion, lead us all to amend whatever may be displeasing to the Majesty of the Most High God!—This, we must ever remember, our own particular interest obliges us to; not only if we would secure a happy immortality in his blissful presence hereafter; but even if we desire to live in ease and satisfaction at present; *every man under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree*, tasting the blessed fruits of uninterrupted liberty and peace. It is moreover a duty bound upon us by all the most solemn and endearing ties; our KING and Country demand it of us, if we are zealous for the safety and honour of the One, and wish for the prosperity and glory of the other! Our Friends
and

and Relations ; Fathers and Husbands ; Brothers and Sons :—The tender Virgin ; the beloved Wife ; the venerable Matron ; all with one voice unite in the important request ; and if you value their happiness, you will not, you cannot refuse them.—But above all ; the most holy Religion of the blessed JESUS, and the pure and rational Worship of our excellent Church, may soon be taken from us, unless we become more worthy to have them preserved.

Let us endeavour to become so, by a compleat reformation ! and while all of us complain of the general corruption, let every one take care to amend one out of the number : for a reformation can no otherwise become universal, than as it is the amendment of every individual. Till this be done, we must not hope for safety !—A few righteous cannot save us ! Noah, Daniel, and Job, shall deliver but their own souls by their righteousness ! so that if we fail in this important matter ; if we will not sacrifice our sins for the safety of our envied LAND, let us talk no more of the love of our country ; for we shall be the worst enemies our country ever saw : as we shall bring down upon it the displeasure of that tremendous Being, whose mighty hand, though powerful to save, is omnipotent to destroy ; and whose favour and protecting care, not all our prayers and penitence, this day, will be able to procure, without the future obedience and piety of our lives.

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In one word then ; if we expect the protection of heaven, we must first take care to deserve it : If we expect that GOD should look down upon us with regard and approbation, we must first look up to HIM with humility and pious love ! if we expect that the ALMIGHTY should *take delight in us, to bless us*, we must first take the highest pleasure in serving and obeying him. Then *will the Lord of hosts go forth with our armies ; and the God of Jacob be our refuge !* Then need we not fear, though the earth be removed ; and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ! knowing this, that *if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we shall have a building of GOD ; an house not made with hands ; eternal in the heavens.*



SERMON

S E R M O N II.

ECCLESIASTICUS, XXXIV, 26.

A man that fasteth for his sins, and goeth again, and doeth the same, who will hear his prayer? and what doth his humbling profit him?

AS the late solemn exercise of repentance and humiliation, seems to have been universally performed with all that seriousness and devotion, which every christian mind could not but earnestly desire; we cannot but entertain the pleasing hope, it will be attended with all those blessed fruits, every pious heart is ardent to implore.

If we were then unfeignedly sincere, and our hearts devoutly, and affectionately humbled.—If from a deep sense of the wretchedness and ingratitude of those who are departed from God, and at enmity against him by wicked works; we have returned to Him, like the repentant prodigal, with undissembled remorse; and sought the light of His countenance with a pious solicitude;—what glorious consequences may we not expect to behold?

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May we not hope, with humble confidence, that God will again *send forth His SPIRIT to renew the face of* the moral world? and that the LORD *will once more rejoice in his works?* May we not hope that divine Grace will dispel, with its heavenly beams, the clouds and darkness of our benighted minds? and that the KINGDOM of God will be erected in all our hearts? May we not hope to see religion lift up again her long dejected head; and all impiety and prophaneness fly before her face? ashamed to appear in her venerable presence, and struck with the majesty of her awful brow! May we not hope to behold christianity, at length, taking her lasting seat in all our minds; and establishing an immoveable empire over all our souls? diffusing throughout the happy realm, — meekness and patience; temperance and humility; justice and piety; purity and love! those incomparable and heaven-born GRACES; which are the distinguished ornaments of her amiable children; and the peculiar result of her blessed sway! May we not hope for these glorious effects from that day's devotion and piety, which beheld a nation returning to their offended God; and millions prostrate in humility before him! a sight, — at which the *morning stars* might sing again together; and all the *sons of God* repeat *their shouts of joy!* for the conversion of thousands is a more glorious work than the creation
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of a world ! a sight, which must produce uncommon joy in the presence of the angels of God ; and upon which the most High would look down with satisfaction and delight. But there the consequence will not end ; for “ those, whom God “ delights in, must be happy.” A virtuous, religious, and pious people, can never fail of procuring his protection and defence. *His hand shall hold them fast ; His arm shall strengthen them ; and the LORD thy God, says Moses, to the people of Israel, shall set thee up on high, above all the nations of the earth ! The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee, to be smitten before thy face : they shall come out against thee one way ; and shall flee before thee seven ways ! and all these blessings shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field ! Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body ; and the fruit of thy ground ; and the fruit of thy cattle ; the increase of thy kine ; and the flocks of thy sheep ! Blessed shall be thy basket, and thy store ! Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out !*

But what are we to look for, my beloved, if instead of an act of true penitence and devotion, our fast has been nothing but dissimulation with God ? If instead of offering up before his throne, the sweet oblation of a pure and contrite heart, we have only presented him with the formal lip

service of pharisaical hypocrites? and if instead of a life of exemplary virtue, piety, and holiness for the future, we venture to return to our former vices, and suffer ourselves to continue under the slavery and dominion of our lusts? What are we to look for, but that the sword of vengeance, which long has hung over our heads, should no longer be restrained from falling with ten-fold indignation upon us? What are we to look for, but to be deprived of the enjoyment of our most holy religion; *and that the Kingdom of God will be taken from us, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

Our future conduct, then, is a matter of the highest importance; since from thence will be discovered the sincerity of our humiliation, and upon that will depend the success of our prayers: for he *that fasteth for his sins, and goeth again and doeth the same, who will hear his prayer? and what doth his humbling profit him?* I am persuaded, however, *better things of you; and things that accompany salvation:* but because we can never be too much upon our guard against the malice of our great and subtle adversary, and the treachery of our own deceitful hearts, which conspire to betray men into a fatal delusion, to imagine a sorrow for sin will be sufficient to obtain remission for it, without that real amendment such sorrow should always produce; I thought I could not more profitably engage your attention,
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than by discoursing upon the great impiety that man is guilty of, who having *fasted for his sins, goeth again, and doeth the same*: from which consideration we shall naturally be led to discover both the unprofitableness and danger of such a conduct.

And the impiety of it will abundantly appear, by considering it as an attempt to impose on the wisdom and discernment of that omniscient BEING who has once most solemnly declared in his holy word, *I, the LORD, search the hearts, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings*! Why has he made this awful declaration, but to deter us from so daring and dreadful an hypocrisy? What has he given us this solemn notice for, but that whenever we address the throne of Grace, a reverential awe may possess our minds, and every holy affection be kindled in our souls; to the end that our devotions might be pleasing in his sight; and our supplications ascend as incense from the burning altar of our hearts.—To approach our Maker then, at any time with affected sorrow and remorse;—to pretend to confess and lament our transgressions before the LORD, without feeling the burden of them, and a real anguish and compunction for them;—and to call ourselves wretched and miserable sinners, while we are strangers to that inward concern and trouble which ought to fill our hearts at so sad and mournful a reflection;

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is undoubtedly a crime of peculiar heinousness and guilt: neither is it to be wondered at, if it should be followed by a return to those very vices, we thus deceitfully acknowledge and deplore.—But when the sinner not only bewails his misdoings before the throne of a most wise and holy God, but also, by mortification and abstinence, inflicts upon himself a voluntary punishment; testifying in the strongest manner, his own conviction and abhorrence of them, and the just sense he has of the vengeance they deserve!—this is advancing to the highest step in outward repentance; and, consequently, his return to them, will be rising to the highest degree of guilt.—A guilt, which the most cursed beings, now groaning in the regions of misery and despair, have never yet been able to reach!—They never repented, and relapsed into sin!—God never yet vouchsafed them an opportunity to repent! that is a favour only bestowed upon ungrateful man! and to abuse this unmerited mercy to so horrid a purpose, has something in it so exceeding sinful, as is beyond the power of language to express.

Consider well with yourselves what goodness it is to allow the presumptuous an hour to repent in; and not proceed to execute that righteous sentence which justice cannot but pronounce; and mercy itself must approve!—This is an hour for which the unhappy spirits of darkness would rejoice to suffer

suffer whole ages to come, if God would at length but condescend to grant it them!—and this is that blessed hour, which on the late day of general humiliation was graciously afforded us all;—an hour of inestimable value! of unspeakable importance! and not only big with the fate of these kingdoms, but upon which the future happiness or misery of many of us may greatly depend: for whoever shall venture to return to those impieties which in that hour he pretended to bewail and renounce, will plainly discover his penitence was hypocrisy; and his devotion pretence: and that instead of employing those precious moments to the most noble and salutary ends, by returning to God with all his heart, he has spent them in an act of the highest contempt and mockery of his CREATOR! for can you conceive any thing more amazingly sinful, than to offer such an affront to the wisdom of Heaven! and thus contemptuously to disregard the MAJESTY of the LORD? However easily such a dissembler may have imposed on the short-sightedness of a man like himself, yet let him remember, to his disappointment and confusion, that God can never be mocked! for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh upon the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart!—And as the hypocrite in his heart despises his MAKER, therefore he that made him will shew him no favour; but wrath shall come upon him

him to the uttermost ; and in his security he shall be destroyed ; and perish in the day of vengeance !

From these considerations we discover very manifestly the unprofitableness of such a fast : for this being one of the highest exercises of penitence we can perform, when the virtue and excellence of it is destroyed by this base mixture of hypocrisy and deceit, it immediately turns into an act of the most desperate wickedness :—and when that which was to have been a means of reconciling us to God, becomes itself the boldest insult against his MAJESTY we can possibly commit, how can we imagine it will procure us that protection from Heaven, so necessary at this juncture, and which it was the peculiar design of that humiliation to obtain ? It can never purchase for us this blessing, if the warning the sacred scriptures have given us, is at all to be depended upon : for there we are informed that *God beareth not sinners* : and we cannot but be sensible, if the holy exercises of that day, do not lead us to renounce and forsake our evil ways, we shall become much more criminal in the sight of God than before :—our very tears will stand in need of washing, and our penitence and *prayers be abomination to the LORD !*

What will be the fate of so ungodly a people, we may learn from those declarations God himself has made to us in his holy word. *At what time,*

time, says the LORD by his prophet Jeremiah, *I shall speak concerning a nation, or concerning a kingdom, to build, and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it will not obey my voice, I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them; and I will pluck up and utterly destroy that nation, saith the LORD of Hosts.* But there is a passage still more remarkable in the second book of the Chronicles, and more peculiarly suitable to our present purpose. Solomon in that beautiful and excellent prayer he makes on the day of the dedication of the temple, enumerates the various calamities that might befall the people of God, as so many important occasions upon which they should send up their supplications from that holy place; and among many others, he mentions *their enemies besieging them in the cities of their land; or if they should go out to war by the way that God should send them.* Then, says he, O LORD GOD, *what prayer, or what supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every man shall know his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands before Thee,—then bear thou from heaven thy dwelling-place, and when thou hearest forgive; and maintain their cause; that all the earth may know thy name, and fear thee, as thy people Israel doth.*—This is the prayer: and we shall do well to attend to the answer God himself condescended to give him.—*The LORD appeared to Solomon in the night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer. If my people, which is called by my name,*
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shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin; and will heal their land. But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes, and my commandments which I have given you,—then will I pluck them up by the roots out of the land which I have given unto them!—And if it shall be asked, why hath the LORD done thus unto this land?—it shall be answered, because they forsook the LORD GOD of their fathers; therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them!

You have now heard, my Brethren, from the mouth of GOD, what it is we are to expect from the uplifted sword of divine vengeance, if we venture to provoke the LORD to anger. We may justly expect *there will be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people: for thus saith the LORD GOD: Ah! I will ease me of mine adversaries; I will avenge me of mine enemies!*—And that we may not presumptuously rely upon our outward humiliation; and vainly trust to any external ceremonies, and forms of devotion to avert the divine displeasure, without the real amendment and pure obedience of our lives;—let me desire you once more to attend to the words of GOD by his prophet Isaiah. *To what purpose are the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt-offering of rams; and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats!—Bring no more your vain oblations unto me! Incense is an abomination*
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unto me ! Your new moons, and your sabbaths ; the calling of assemblies I cannot away with ; it is iniquity ; even the solemn meeting : and when ye spread forth your hands unto me, I will hide my face from you ; and when ye make many prayers, I will not bear : Your hands are full of blood. But wash ye ; make ye clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well.

Here then we cannot but take notice, of how little value and signification all external performances are, even the most costly sacrifices, in the sight of God, without purity, righteousness and holiness of life. These are the fruits God has, no doubt, expected his unmerited forbearance would at length have produced ! Mercy has waited long, and patiently ! Divine tenderness and love have pursued us through all our deviations from the paths of duty, with such repeated favours, and undeserved blessings, as if resolved to overcome us at last, and melt down our unrelenting hearts, into affection, gratitude and obedience. But there is a time when goodness itself can hold out no longer, and infinite compassion will come to an end. If ingratitude and rebellion are all the returns we intend to make him, for his great and unparalleled loving kindness, we must expect that mercy will be turned into the hottest displeasure ; and *we shall be devoured by the sword, for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.*

Turn ye, therefore, from your evil ways ! for why will ye die ? Oh ! consider, before you feel,

it, *what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the LIVING GOD ! That righteous GOD, who alone loveth righteousness; and whose countenance can only behold the upright !—That righteous GOD, who to the wicked shall become a consuming fire; whom the LORD shall destroy with the spirit of his mouth; and consume by the brightness of his coming.*

If therefore you have any regard for the happiness of your country; any affection for those you are united with in the strongest manner, and whom you may soon behold a sacrifice to cruel and unrelenting foes:—think it not sufficient to avert the impending calamities, and appease the anger of an incensed GOD, that you have one day humbled yourselves before him; unless you turn from those iniquities, which have made that humiliation so necessary and becoming!—How else *can he bear your prayer? and what will your humbling profit you?*—A question, you are well able, by this time, to answer for yourselves; since from what has been already observed, you must be abundantly convinced, that so far from profiting you, it will only enflame and aggravate your guilt; and call down upon your devoted heads, a more swift and terrible destruction. This is the consequence to be looked for in general, from so daring an offence: but there is to every particular offender, a still more dreadful consequence to be expected; for you must remember,—not only temporal ruin, but everlasting perdition awaits them.

If no other motives, then, will prevail with
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us, may these *terrors of the LORD* have power to *persuade*; if we have no longer any sincere affection for our Country, nor any tenderness for our friends, sure we have preserv'd at least some little compassion for our own souls! [those precious souls, for which our great REDEEMER expired upon the Cross, and whose eternal happiness if we sincerely regard, let us beware of falling into so dangerous a crime!—It will be one effectual means of guarding us against it, frequently to recollect the wise man's expostulation in the text, *A man that fasteth for his sins, and goeth again, and doeth the same, what will his humbling profit him?* That such an humiliation can neither forward our progress in the christian life, nor procure us the favour of God, and eternal blessedness in the life to come, must be the assent of every sober and considerate mind; and which I shall now endeavour more distinctly to prove.

In the first place, if our penitence has been insincere, and our repentance only feign'd and hypocritical, we then surely can have no doubt but that our destruction will be as certain, as it is just; and great, as it is inevitable! for *what*, says holy *Job*, *is the hope of the hypocrite when God taketh away his soul?*—On the other hand, tho' our humiliation may have been sincere, and our trouble real and unaffected; yet if we relapse into our former evil courses, after thus humbling ourselves in sincerity for them;—we are then in a still more dangerous and deplorable state. —For before a man
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can be sincerely penitent for his transgressions, he must have been brought to a true sense of their evil nature and pernicious effects! He must have felt the weight and burden of them; and been overwhelm'd at the thoughts of so ungrateful a return for the many signal instances of divine goodness and love! — He must have beheld himself in the same shocking light wherein he appears before the eyes of his CREATOR; as well as felt the intolerable misery of those who have forsaken God, and are under the frowns of his indignation and displeasure; all this he cannot but have seen and felt, if he has been sincerely penitent; and after this, should he venture deliberately to offend again, there is great reason to fear, he will become for the future more hardened and insensible; and, in the end, utterly obdurate, and incorrigible. — There are some hopes of a man who has never yet been truly penitent! — When he comes to see himself as he really is, and discover that wretched and miserable state to which his sins have reduc'd him! — there are some hopes, that a sight so full of horror, would prevent his ever returning to them again; and lead him to the mercy seat of that divine SAVIOUR who only is able to deliver him from them. — But what hopes can there be of him, who has been presented with such a sight, and yet has suffer'd the impresson to wear off again? — What hopes of him, who after feeling conviction and remorse, can presumptuously sin against light and knowledge? What hopes of him, who

who has had a view of the odious nature of sin, and been alarm'd at the terrible consequences attending it? who has seen, as it were, to use the language of scripture, *hell open before him*; and the gates of heaven shut against him! Who has heard the voice of the compassionate SAVIOUR and just Judge of the World pronouncing that sentence which shall never be revok'd — *Go ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.*

“Go, seek your portion with hypocrites and unbelievers! all your vain and deceitful pretences can never impose upon unerring wisdom and omniscience! all your boasted professions of my religion, while you have shewn forth none of the fruits of it in your lives, will never entitle you to a place among my faithful disciples; nor to reign with me in my Kingdom of Glory.” *Depart from me! I know you not! ye have been only the workers of iniquity!* — What hopes then of him, who has heard this awful sentence sounding in his ears; and been able to get over so mighty a restraint? What is there that can possibly subdue his unruly passions; and controul his enslav'd and corrupted will? — Not the grace of God! — for that is departed from him. — Not the fear of punishment! for that he has been able to overcome! Not the hopes of glory, for that he undervalues, and disregards! — Not an aversion for sin! — for the love of that is still reigning in his mortal body; and leads him, at all adventures, *to obey it in the lusts thereof.* In short then, what hopes can ever be

be entertain'd after such wilful perverseness and disobedience? —Let not mortal man presume to take upon him the province of the most Highest ; and attempt to determine so important a point : but let us reverently listen to the word of God, who has long ago so solemnly pronounc'd upon the case. —*It is impossible for those who have been once enlightened* —enlightened as these sinners have been ; and brought by the holy spirit to discern their sinfulness and ingratitude ; their wretchedness and guilt —*it is impossible for those who have been thus enlightened, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.*

You see therefore the unprofitableness of that humiliation (tho' ever so sincere) which is not attended with an entire renunciation of every ungodly work ; and a stedfast perseverance in a christian and holy life. —If these blessed fruits, so reasonably to be expected, shou'd not be produced, we may justly tremble at the consequence : for as such a mortification and repentance, would then only render our hearts more hardened, and lead us still farther from PERFECTION ; —the event will certainly be, —the loss of God's favour at present ; and eternal banishment from his presence hereafter.

May these awful considerations have such an happy influence upon all our hearts, that our solemn FAST may be a means of keeping alive every good purpose, and resolution of our minds ; and leading us to an uniform course of obedience
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in the future conduct of our lives ! —But for this we must depend upon a greater power than our own. Remember, if that day, by the gracious influences of the *DIVINE SPIRIT*, you began to feel trouble at the recollection of your sins, and to perceive the intolerable misery of their insupportable burden —remember, to whom you must seek for deliverance and relief. It is to that *DIVINE REDEEMER*, who tenderly invites the weary and heavy laden to come unto him ; and graciously promises, who ever will come, shall find rest and peace to their souls.

To HIM then let us approach with truly broken and contrite hearts, unfeignedly hungry and thirsting after Righteousness ! His holy spirit let us devoutly seek for, by constant, and fervent prayer, and a diligent attendance at his holy table ; where we shall be likely to receive the most plentiful effusions of it, as it is one of those blessed means of grace, he himself has appointed to be us'd. Our weak endeavours being thus assisted by the strength of his might, we shall be more than conquerors thro' HIM that loved us : and being filled with all the fruits of the *Spirit*, walk worthy of the *LORD*, who has called us to his kingdom and glory : in all lowliness and meekness : long suffering and patience, holiness and piety ; humility and love : adorning the doctrine of God our *SAVIOUR* in all things ; and having our conversation as becometh the gospel of *CHRIST*.

Then if after all our efforts, we cannot save our Country from ruin, we shall preserve ourselves from

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eternal destruction. If we cannot avert the judgments that seem to threaten our land, but God should resolve to destroy it, *for the wickedness of them that dwell therein*: we shall enjoy the comfort to think, that the frowns of his displeasure are brightned into smiles of approbation upon us!—we shall enjoy the comfort to think, that when our LORD shall come with ten thousand of his saints, we shall be able to meet him with confidence and joy:—shall stand before his presence with a pious hope, and wait his sentence with a joyful satisfaction; transported with the blessed and comfortable assurance; that having redeemed us already from the dominion of sin in this world, he will deliver us from the everlasting punishment of it in the next: will affectionately receive us as his dear children; and amidst the acclamations of rejoicing angels, bestow upon us GLORY, HONOUR, and IMMORTALITY in that Eternal and Blessed KINGDOM which can never be shaken.

With a view to the enjoyment of this supreme FELICITY, may the infinite and eternal God regard our supplications and prayers for each other! May his blessing attend; and his divine spirit sanctify both our souls and bodies! conducting us safely thro' the several stages of our pilgrimage in this perishing world, till we arrive at the land of everlasting life; the heavenly Jerusalem; where, our labours being ended, we may rest for ever with the SON of GOD, in the bosom of his love; and our prayers be changed into eternal HALLELUJAHS! AMEN.

Amos

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